

Proverbs 17-19 • Wisdom for Life

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Proverbs chapter 17. We're going to begin here. And as we've been going through the Proverbs, we haven't been reading every single verse. One of the reasons is that many of the statements that are made in the Proverbs are made repeatedly and the themes are very similar. We're going to just be picking out some of these in these chapters that we're going to be covering tonight. And looking at the wisdom that God gives us here in His word.

Before we get started, I was just chatting here with some folks down here about just wisdom. The application of wisdom. What a blessing it is that you and I have been given the wisdom from God's Word with which to address the issues of life.

We look at the people around us, our neighbors, many times family members, friends, who are not walking in this kind of wisdom. They're not living with an understanding of God's wisdom. And so, when challenges come, and when don't challenges come? Challenges always come. But when challenges come, rather than applying the wisdom of God's Word they're just kind of left to their own devices and frankly, the flesh.

Like for example, when there's conflict. Who doesn't have conflict? We all have conflict. Well, the wisdom of the Proverbs tells us how to deal with conflict. Tells us how to deal with an angry word that's been given to us. How to respond. Tells us to respond with a soft answer because it turns away wrath.

Well, that's something you and I have learned. Hopefully it's something we've begun to apply. But think about how you used to live your life before you knew Jesus. And you were... And you didn't have the wisdom of God's Word with which to apply to these situations.

How about money things, money issues. How to deal with stress. How to understand things like jealousy and what it does to you physically. What anger and what stress do to your body physically. The Proverbs gives us insights into these things. Tells us that we can trust in God with all of our hearts, all of our being.

And it challenges us not to trust on our own understanding. Well, without the wisdom of God's Word, what else do you have, but your own understanding? You'll remember when we went through that passage way back in the early part of Proverbs, and we were told don't lean upon your own understanding because it can't bear the weight of the issues that you're going through. And so we're told to lean instead on the wisdom and power of God.

You have that. Your neighbors who don't know the Lord don't. They don't. They're leaning on their own understanding. And what are they doing? They're watching that. They're watching it collapse all around them, aren't they? Because they've adopted the wisdom of the world. Well, or they've just embraced the wisdom of the world because it's just, it's all they've got. What a blessing for you and I to have the wisdom of God's Word.

Proverbs chapter 17 beginning in verse one says,

"1 Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife."
(ESV)

This is again, a typical proverb. You'll remember that proverbs usually speak a truth and then speak the opposite, or they speak of a contrasting statement. And this one is no different.

And it basically observes that a poor, but peace-filled home, is better than a wealthy home that is furnished with all the blessings that this world can offer, but is filled also full of hostility and bickering. And so peace and quietness in the home are incredibly valuable.

Here's a question I have for you. Is your home a place of peace and quiet? It's amazing how we get used to the din of noise. I go over sometimes to people's homes and I'm surprised that they have the TV going and no one's watching it. It just becomes background noise. But I think we've learned to put up with a certain level of gray noise and we've lost the ability to quiet our spirit. Because home has ceased to become a place of peace, a sanctuary.

When Sue and I moved into the house that we're in now, which has been about 13 years ago, I told her, and she didn't argue with me on this at all, but I said, I want the TV to be in another room, not in our living area. Because this is where we're going to talk and be a family. And I don't want to have to go somewhere else to turn on that stupid television. And we've kept it that way even now that the kids are gone.

And it's funny, our oldest daughter came over a number of weeks ago, and we were just talking about home. And she was telling me how the kids, our grown kids now, all like to come and visit, and I said, why? She said, dad, this place is a sanctuary. It's a place of quietness.

And I thought, wow, that's pretty cool. I'm glad of that. I need that and I think we all need some level of quietness. And this proverb tells us that - that is something to strive for. A home of peace. A place of peace is something to strive for.

Yet, what are we usually striving for? We're usually striving in this world for wealth, which tends to bring along with it hostility and bickering. And so here we now, we finally got money. Yay! But we're at each other's throats.

Is your home a place of peace and quietness? Well, that's a better thing. Even if you're dirt poor. Even if you don't have two nickels to rub together. So what? You got a place of peace, you have a wonderful place. You got a place of rest where it can be quiet, where you can be quiet. That's a good thing.

Skip down to verse three. It says,

"3 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts." (ESV)

There's a great proverb. The words crucible and furnace are essentially synonymous since they both describe something that is heated to extreme temperatures in order to purify metal, like silver or gold. And that's how they purify it.

When you take gold and silver, not that I've ever mined for silver and gold, but I'm given to understand that when it comes out of the earth it's filled with other impurities. And so they literally put it into a furnace or a crucible. And they heat it to these extreme temperatures and when they do, those other impurities are burned away. And you have the liquid silver or the liquid gold remaining.

I suppose it probably didn't take all that long for somebody to be purifying gold or silver, and to be sitting there watching that and to kind of make the connection, man, that's a lot like life. As I'm sitting here burning off the impurities of this gold, and as I'm sitting here burning off the impurities of this silver, this is a lot like life. This is a lot like what the Lord puts us through. He puts us through the heat. He turns on the heat in our lives or allows the heat to

be turned up in our lives, so that the same thing would happen. The impurities would be burned away.

It's one of the reasons why the Bible says that he who has suffered in the flesh is done with sin. There's a process by which impurities are burned away. And as believers we know that God uses trials to purify our hearts. Doesn't make us look forward to the trials anymore. We still hate them just as much as we always have. I hate trials, I'm sure you do too. Who likes a trial? But 1 Peter reminds us the importance of those trials. Let me put this up on the screen for you from 1 Peter chapter 1:6 and 7. It says,

1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV)

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

"In this (and that means it's suffering, is the this) you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith- (look at this) more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

What's this Bible verse saying? Saying that tough times are God's way of purifying our lives. Just as the gold and the silver are purified in the furnace and the crucible, so also our hearts and lives are purified in the difficulties of life. This is another one of those pieces of wisdom that you and I have that the world doesn't have.

Oh, yeah, they'll say things like how hardship builds character. But then you got to ask them the question, without Christ, what difference does it make? I mean, so what? You go through hardship in life without the Lord and it builds character. Why? Why do you need character?

I mean, what, for what reason is character necessary in the world? Good grief. It certainly isn't necessary for wealth and fame. We see that plastered all over our TVs and magazines and internet all the time. You can be wealthy, you can be famous, and have absolutely zero character. And these people seem to be living the high life. Hardship builds character. Big deal, you see. Apart from Christ, it all kind of just falls apart. You and I know that there's a deeper, more eternal work that God is doing in our lives.

Christians, listen to me. Do you understand that the things that you're learning now, the things that are being challenged in your life now, will have an eternal effect in your life? You didn't think it was just for this life. We are being prepared for the next life. We are being prepared in this life for the life to come. And the things that you gain from this life, the lessons you learn, the understanding that you gain, the growth that you experience, you get to take that with you. And it'll be a glorious thing.

It might not be something that you look at today as all that great. But let me tell you, it's better than gold, better than silver. Okay? Don't think you're going through all these things just for today. God is doing an eternal work in your life through the things that you are going through.

Skip down to verse eight. This verse is interesting because it sounds like God's Word is condoning bribery. It says,

"8 A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers." (ESV)

So let's all start bribing one another. Well, that's obviously not what's going on here. It's simply making the point, bribery works. It does, doesn't it? Why do you think it's a popular way of getting people to do things? It works. Do you understand Christians, there's a lot of things in life that work? But they work against you if you actually do them. Do you understand?

In other words, if I'm going through a stressful time in my life, I can choose to deal with that stress in my own strength, or I can trust in the Lord. It doesn't mean that if I deal with it in my own strength, that's not going to work. For example, if there's a person in my life who's causing me stress, and God wants me to forgive them. God wants me to reach out to them and love them, but I don't want to. And so, what I do is I just separate myself from them. I just (sound and gesture of hand chopping) cut them out of my life.

Well, you know what, that can reduce the stress. It can work. But I've missed what God wanted me to do. I've missed the growth. I've missed the Christ like attitude, you see. I've missed it because I did it myself. Well, what I did worked. Are you with me? And you know what that teaches me? It teaches me that when I do things in my own strength, I can get results.

The problem is, I get a little smaller every time I do things in my own strength. I become a little more self-sufficient rather than depending on God. And over a period of time, I lose my connection to God. I begin to lose my relationship to

God. And then something really big happens and I'm completely out of practice in trusting God and letting him be the Lord of my life.

Suddenly, see, I've been lord of my own life for all this time. Been lord of my own life. Been doing my own thing. Somebody causes me problems, I know what to do. Shunk! (hand chopping gesture) Yeah, no problem, you're gone. And now, life has presented something that I can't fix. I can't just chop it away. Now what am I going to do? Trust the Lord, are you kidding? Haven't been doing that.

So, understand please that when the Bible makes statements like this and it says that essentially bribery works, it's not telling you to go out and bribe. Because we know from other Bible passages what God's Word says about bribery. Let me put one up on the screen for you from Exodus chapter 23. Look at this,

Exodus 23:8 (ESV)

And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

Okay, so we know what God's Word has to say on the topic of bribery. We know here that this proverb is simply giving us an insight into the fact that, yeah, it works. But you know what? You're going to be violating your heart. Because in your heart is the God who said, do not submit or give in to bribery.

Skip down to verse 12. This is an interesting verse. It says,

"12 Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly." (ESV)

This is a great statement. I think it's probably pretty regularly known, commonly known, that a female bear that is separated from her cubs is an extremely dangerous animal. There have been stories that would probably curl your hair of bears defending their cubs. Even if she just thinks her cubs are in danger.

But this proverb says that- that situation, which I would never want to...I mean I, if I saw...in fact I did just this last summer. Sue and I went up to Canada for our 40th wedding anniversary, and there was all these cars lined up along the road. We thought, what's going on up there? Well, we drove up to go see and there was a bear, a mother bear with like two or three cubs following behind her, kind of foraging through the plants there, eating or whatever.

But there were these officials who are going up and down the road telling people you can't go any farther than this. Don't get out of your vehicle. If you do, you can get up on top of your vehicle. But you can't approach. Well, they know it's dangerous, especially when you got a bear with its cubs. It was very cool to see. And I wouldn't have dreamt of getting out of my car and saying, hey honey, let's go up for a closer look. I wouldn't have done that because that would have been really dangerous.

And yet it's preferable to meeting a fool. That's what the proverb says. It's preferable. You're better off going up to that mother bear and challenging her with her cubs than you are meeting up with a fool in his folly. If the bear started chasing me, I think I would probably run. Well, I think you ought to run away from the fool in his folly too, even more so.

And there are lots of people who are speaking nothing but worldly foolishness in our lives. And we have to learn to discern it. When somebody says something to you and the world might think they're greatly wise. But you hear it, and it just doesn't resonate in your heart. It's like, no, that's just not right. It's foolish. Don't engage that foolishness. Just run.

Skip down to verse 17,

"17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (ESV)

This is talking about true friendship. And it says that a true friend is somebody who loves at all times. And you know what all those times includes? It includes the times when we're not very lovable. The times when we're kind of being jerks. We're doing things, saying things that aren't very nice. But a true friend loves even in those times, even during those times. And they're there to help, even when life gets crazy.

Too many people who say they're friends turn out to be fair weather friends. Meaning that they stick around as long as it's convenient, but when life kind of gets hard they bolt. But the really interesting part here is that while I've been describing what a true friend is, probably most of us in this room have been thinking to ourselves, I wonder who my true friend is, instead of asking the question, am I a true friend to anyone else? That's the question we have to be asking.

Isn't it interesting that when we hear descriptions of what a true friend is, we immediately go, yeah, I know, I don't have any true friends like that. I wonder why I don't have any true friend? Well, are you a true friend? I think that's what

we ought to be focused on. Because, frankly, the Bible says what a man sows, so also shall he reap. If you sow seeds of true friendship, you're likely to reap it back. Am I a true friend, somebody who sticks close?

Skip down to verse 19,

"19 Whoever loves transgression (that's a person who loves to do wrong) loves strife; (which is bickering, arguing, and that sort of thing.) he who makes his door high seeks destruction." (ESV)

Isn't that an interesting statement? You're all looking at me like, what does that mean? "...*he who makes his door high*..." Do you know what that means? It's interesting, the phrase is actually, literally, "he who exalts his gate." That's what it says in the Hebrew, "*he who exalts his gate seeks destruction*." What does it mean to exalt your gate? Do you know? I don't. I don't. I'm not really sure what it means.

And the reason I'm bringing it up is because I'm sharing this with you as an example, a statement in the Bible that's figurative. And you know, we use figurative statements all the time. But we know usually what they mean because we live in America and we're used to hearing them. But when I use the term figurative, I'm talking about phrases or statements that we make that use metaphors, or hyperbole, or possibly even personification. And that's a figurative kind of a statement.

And we have all kinds of them. For example, if I said to you, wow, this coffee shop is an icebox. I would be employing a metaphor in a figurative statement. I wasn't literally saying it's an icebox. You know what I mean. It's super cold. Right? Or maybe I'd say, she's drowning in a sea of grief. Now, you and I know exactly what that means. But if you were to say that during Solomon's day, they'd probably go, she's what? Or, she's as happy as a clam. Clams are happy? I'm not even sure where that one comes from. But if I said it, you know what it means.

Well, again, a Jew living back in Solomon's day probably wouldn't. Just as we don't know what it means to "exalt your gate." We can guess, and I read several guesses. But the essence of this proverb is that causing strife among people, causing difficulty among people, stirring them up, is equal to great transgression. Okay? So that's essentially the essence of what is being said there.

Verse 22,

"22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." (ESV)

Now, this is another interesting physiological statement. It says that joy is good for you physically. Did you know that? Joy is good for you. It actually has a positive effect physiologically. But at the same time, it says the disappointment, and by the way, that's what a "crushed spirit" means, it means somebody who's been disappointed. It says that *"a crushed spirit"* has negative physical effects. It says here *"dries up the bones,"* which is kind of an interesting statement.

We go through times in life when we're happy and joyful and we go through times when we're disappointed with life and what it brings us. I've learned in my years living on this planet, that sometimes, maybe even several times, yeah, maybe even all the time, when I am disappointed, it is often because I have unrealistic expectations. I don't think we consider that possibility enough, to be completely honest with you.

We hear people talking a lot about this generation of people who are kind of entitled. We feel like we're entitled. We're entitled to be happy because we've been told that ever since we were little children you deserve, you deserve, you deserve. And we grow up we become believers. And we realize that's all part of the "me generation," the self-focus that is fundamentally wrong and unbiblical. But we still believe it.

And we still have expectations in our lives that are unrealistic. And when those unrealistic expectations aren't met, we struggle with disappointment, or, if you will, being crushed in spirit. But many times, the issues are ours. They're ours. And we might look at somebody else who we think disappointed us, but the fact is, I had my expectations unrealistically high, or put in an unrealistic place, and now I'm going to blame them.

Skip down to verse 27. It says,

"27 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." (ESV)

A cool spirit doesn't mean like a cool cat. The cool spirit is a person who is slow to anger. This is an idea that has frankly been touched on before, but I think it's worth repeating. It's basically saying that somebody who thinks before speaking, somebody who is slow to anger, is, biblically speaking here, considered a person of understanding. Slow to speak, slow to respond, slow to get angry.

Can I just tell you in all honesty, I have not always shown myself to be a person of understanding. There have been many times in my life I have responded to something that someone said with a flash of anger. And I'm talking about when I was a believer. A flash of anger or just a stupid verbal retort that I had to say it. Well, I didn't have to, I chose to. But you know what I mean. And I've always regretted it. I've always regretted it.

I strive in the Lord to be ever more a person that this verse describes. It's like, Lord, make me a man who considers his words before they just come flowing out of my mouth. Make me the kind of a man who can't be quickly angered.

Chapter 18:1,

"1 Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment." (ESV)

What is this all about when it says, talks about the person who isolates himself? It's talking about somebody who just doesn't open themselves to the input of other people. They're their own thought process. When it comes to life, how they deal with life, and decision making, it's their own desires that they live by. They don't listen to anybody else. And what their desires may say, and it says, they "break out against all sound judgment."

You see, there's safety that comes from surrounding ourselves with people who give good advice. And the man who isolates himself and refuses to listen to that advice is instead consumed with his own counsel. And it becomes a very dangerous way to live. Very, very dangerous way to live.

People help us to work things out by giving us insight that if we're willing to take it. When somebody responds and says, really, that's what your plan is? Well, let me throw out another option. Well, if I'm smart, I'm going to go, yeah, okay, what do you think? What are your thoughts? But if I isolate myself, I'm going to break out against all sound judgment.

Verse two,

"2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." (ESV)

And if you need an example of this, just get on to the comment section of just about any social media or online news item, and just read how people love to express their own opinions. And yet, they don't think about them as their own

opinions. They think about them as the gospel. Boom! Stamp it with truth. Yeah, anyway, stepping down off my soapbox now.

Verse 10, skip down in there in your Bible. I love this verse.

"10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." (ESV)

I almost kind of like to read this as the smart man too. I'll just add that one in there. *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower;* and if you have half a brain, you're going to, you're going to run to the Lord and be safe."

It's interesting that this is the only place in Proverbs where the name of the Lord is used. That phrase, *"The name of the Lord..."* and in most cases when it's used throughout the Bible, it refers to the attributes of God, so think about His faithfulness. You could say the faithfulness of the Lord is a strong tower, right? The kindness of the Lord is a strong tower. The goodness of the Lord is a strong tower. The wisdom of the Lord is a strong tower. You could name any of the attributes. The love of God is a strong tower. You can name any of them and say this is what it is because this is the Lord.

And the righteous man runs, and that is the whole idea of the person who puts their wholehearted trust in the protection of the Lord. Okay? That's the idea of running to it and what happens once he does. The conclusion is, he's safe there. There's safety. There's safety. There aren't many things in life that I can talk to you about that are safe. There aren't that many. I mean really, truly safe. Where you're really safe. This is one. Run to the Lord. Run to who He is. There's safety there. There's safety. Boy, we need to be safe, don't we? Well, there's safety in Him.

Skip down to verse 17; Oh, this is a good one.

"17 The one who states his case first seems right, until the other one comes (along) and examines him." (ESV)

This is such a great reminder. I think it's one of the most helpful reminders, frankly, in the Proverbs that I have found, particularly as a Pastor. But even not just as a pastor. But I'm reminded here that everything has two sides. Every, everything has two sides.

And even though I may trust one individual telling me their story and not really trust the other person, I have to at least give credence to the idea there are two

sides to every story. And frankly, if you don't listen to both sides before you kind of run off halfcocked, that's foolish. It's a foolish thing to do. And we're, that's the reminder of this verse. That hearing just one side and assuming you have the whole story, just isn't really a bright thing to do.

And you know what though, we do it all the time. All the time. Especially if it kind of gets our dander up. Or you know, I mean, we're offended. We share somebody else's offense. Do you know what so and so did to me? And then they begin to tell us this thing, and we're like, you're kidding! That creep! And we're just ready to go wring his neck. I can't believe! And we go to talk to him. If we do, we're just loaded for bear.

Rather than using the wisdom of God's Word that says why don't you tell me your side of this thing? So and so came and shared something. But God's Word says that there's always two sides to a story. You tell me what's going on from your perspective. That's wisdom. That's the wisdom of God's Word. How many times have we gotten into trouble because we didn't know the whole story?

Verse 22. Skip down there.

"²² He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." (ESV)

Now what's interesting about this verse is, it doesn't say it, but the inference is very strong that it's talking not just about a wife, but a good wife. Because elsewhere in the Proverbs, it deals a lot with kind of a bad wife. And of course it talks about bad husbands too. But it particularly makes reference to a wife who's like constantly nagging and this and that sort of thing.

But, so, the idea here is, he who finds a good wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord. And it could actually say, he who finds a good marriage, finds good. And of course, the word "good" describes that which is pleasing to God, beneficial to our lives and so forth.

Verse 24,

"²⁴ A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (ESV)

Here we come back to the subject of friendship. Very simple proverb. Saying that you might have many friends, as we talked about before, but they're just fair-weather friends. Friends in name only. Contrasted with *"a friend who sticks*

closer than a brother." We all need them. Friends that stick around when life unravels. Are you a friend who sticks around when life unravels for someone else?

So, chapter 19:2. Oh, here's a message for this culture.

" 2 Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way." (ESV)

The message of this proverb is very simple. Don't rush into the unknown just because you want to. Because, you see, we live in a culture that puts "want to" as the highest level of why we do something.

People are constantly saying to people, to others, run after, go after your dream. Whatever...What's your dream in life? Go after it. Well, that's just not realistic. Your dream could be completely unrealistic. It could be completely unattainable. And I'm not trying to be "Debbie Downer" here with you today. I'm simply stating a fact that there are times in life when people have unrealistic sort of expectations of what their life is going to achieve.

I did when I was a teenager. I remember lots of things that I was absolutely certain I was going to be. And I became none of them. And I'm not saying I'm not happy today. I'm content with where the Lord has me, but it's nowhere near where I thought I was going to be on my own, sort of a thing. But I had a desire. But I didn't think about it. I didn't think it through. I didn't count the cost. I didn't understand the consequences of many of my desires.

And this proverb is saying the desire is fine. But if it is absent of knowledge and understanding it's not a good thing. Because, and it says, *"whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way."* That means, what are you running after? I'm running after my desires. I'm going to run. There's my desire. I'm going to chase it down. But I'm not thinking, I'm not considering, I'm not applying prudent, a prudent sort of an attitude toward it. And I just absolutely miss the way that God has for me because I've run after my own desires.

This is a message I think is really appropriate for our culture today. Because I'm sure you see people running toward things, making decisions, heading into areas that are unknown without really thinking it through. Whether it's entering into a marriage relationship too quickly, jumping into a business venture.

Pastor Brent Harrell last Sunday had a great message for us, didn't he? When you're going through a time of transition, when there's decisions that need to be

made, abide close, wait on the Lord, and obey. That's not a "run and grab it" message, is it? That's a "so wait and pray." It's a "rest, wait, and pray" message. And that's why the message he brought last Sunday was so good. And that's what this proverb is echoing.

Verse three. This is really interesting too. It says,

"3 When a man's folly (We'll just say what it means, "When a man's foolishness) brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord." (ESV)

And this verse kind of goes along with the last one. I run after my desire. It doesn't turn out the way I want it, because I was walking in my own foolishness. And now it all fell apart and I'm mad at God. I'm now, I'm mad at God. I'm just mad at God. I have a hard time believing in a God that would allow this to happen.

And what I'm going through is a result of my own decision, and my own foolishness, and my own inattentiveness to my path. I didn't stop to pray about it. I didn't wait on the Lord. I didn't abide in Christ. I just ran after it, and it fell apart. And now I'm angry at God. How could God let this happen?

Somebody comes along and says, well, this is actually a result of your own stupidity, dude. Well then, I just can't believe in a God who would make people so stupid. I'm just having a hard time with that. What I'm saying...

I'm joking to say that if you want to blame God, you're going to blame God. Right? Even if it doesn't make sense. There's a point where we have to take personal responsibility for our decisions.

Skip down to verse 14,

"14 House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord." (ESV)

That's a great verse. You might get a house, your dad might leave you a house. He might even leave you a buck or two in some sort of an inheritance. But a prudent wife who, and again, prudent means "wise, giving thought to her ways," that's what that means, is from the Lord.

Verse 17,

"17 Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." (ESV)

"Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord." Isn't that a great thought? God has special concern for poor people. He cares about those who are poor. And when our response to poor people is one of generosity, it is likened to giving to the Lord. It's pretty wild, isn't it, when you stop and think about that.

Verse 19,

"19 A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, (In other words, he'll pay the price for his anger. It says,) if you deliver him, you will only have to (turn around and) do it again." (ESV)

Boy, what a great reminder. Very simple message here. And it's talking about hot tempered people. And it basically is saying that if you go to rescue a hot tempered man from the trouble he's gotten into, you're going to find that you're only going to have to do it again. And that's what Solomon is observing here. That they don't really learn anything when you bail them out.

It's like, he got into trouble because of his anger, maybe he needs to feel the trouble so that he learns to deal with his anger. They got to learn at some point to control their anger. Or, when I say control your anger, I'm talking about controlling it through the power of the Holy Spirit. I mean, that's the real control. Not self-control from a standpoint of my sinful nature but the control of the Lord.

And I think that means, if somebody has a hot temper, they need to give it to the Lord. They need to just present it in prayer. Lord, this is an area of my life that's a great weakness, and I give it to you in the name of Jesus. And I ask you to transform my heart so that I'm not, don't have this flashpoint of anger.

Because anger is usually the result of pride. Pride. If somebody cuts me off in traffic or they're going too slow, and I'm driving along and somebody in front of me is like...I'm beeping my horns, get moving! What's wrong with your car? And I'm (Pastor Paul beeps like a car horn) sort of a thing. Why am I getting angry? Well, I'm getting angry because this person is inconveniencing me. Right? Why do I feel inconvenienced? Because I believe I'm more important than that person.

You see, you have to feel more important than someone to be inconvenienced by them. You have to. You have to think you're better and more important, or

your goal in life is more important, or where you're going is more important than where they're going.

I forget that sometimes when I'm driving. I do! To this day, I'll have a moment where I'm like, UGH! But then I got to stop and just say to myself, or say to my wife, they could be going somewhere very important. Just as important. Maybe they're driving slow because there's somebody in the car who just is hurt and they just can't take the bumps or, I don't know, I don't know. That's the thing, I don't know. None of us know, exactly. And so, we're sitting there, but we're just making all kinds of assumptions. You're inconveniencing me, and I get angry.

It's pride. Comes down to pride. If I care about people, I mean really care about people, it's going to stop me from getting angry. It is. It's going to cut off my anger right at the knees. Anger comes from pride.

Verse 21,

"²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." (ESV)

Boy, don't ever forget that one! Right?

And then finally, verse 23,

"²³ The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm." (ESV)

Now, I want to pause for just a moment, and this is the last verse we're going to cover tonight. But at first glance when you read this verse, it seems to suggest that if you fear the Lord, you will live a charmed life and never be harmed or come to harm in any way.

But once again, I have to remind you of something. And I started off telling you when we began our study of Proverbs, that the book of Proverbs is not a book of promises, it is a book of observations. And Solomon is observing. And he is sharing with us his observations. And he is talking to you and I about the life of one who fears God. And his observation was that when a man fears God, he gains a contentment to his life, a satisfaction that harm cannot seem to affect.

He's not saying that the man is going to live a perfect life. He's not saying that the man is not going to deal with hardship. He is saying that because the man fears the Lord, he commits all things unto the will of God and the purpose of

God for his life. Okay? In other words, he looks at his life differently than the man who doesn't know the Lord or doesn't fear the Lord. And he sees his life as following the purpose of God. The permissive will of God.

I want to remind you of something that it says in the book of Hebrews. Let's put this one up on the screen from Hebrews chapter 12. Goes like this,

Hebrews 12:5-7 (ESV)

...have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"

...Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives." (Where's that quoted from? From Proverbs chapter three. And then it goes on to say *"It is for discipline (which means training) that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. (And by the way, "sons" is genderless. It's children of God.) For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"* In other words, what son is there whose father doesn't extend some kind of training.

Well, here's the point. The proverb is telling you that the man who fears God, takes this kind of wisdom into his heart when he goes through difficulties of hardship and the evil of that hardship no longer can touch his life because it is God touching his life. It is God allowing and using the difficulties that he goes through as a loving touch of discipline, from a loving father to a beloved son. And so, it has now replaced this idea of harm with the idea of God's hand in my life bringing His purpose to the forefront, bringing out His purpose in my life.

Do you ever say that when somebody comes up to you and tells you about all the hard stuff they're going through? You say, wow, God's really bringing His purpose in your life out, isn't He? They might smack you if you say that. Let me just warn you. If you say it, you might want to take a step back. You're speaking the truth, it might just not be what they want to hear.

So, but it's true. It's true. And ultimately, we need to think of it that way. We need to say, God is fulfilling His purpose in my life. That's the man who fears God. The man who sees life through the matrix of what God is doing to bring about His purpose.